

## MCDONALD, JAMES GROVER

(1886--1964), The League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany.

A history and political science professor, McDonald became interested in the refugee issue in 1933. That same year, he became the head of the newly formed League of Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany, which included a Jewish affairs department.

McDonald was plagued with obstacles from the start. The United States government did not belong to the League of Nations, while the French and British governments were not supportive of his activities. He was not given adequate funding, so the Joint Distribution Committee allocated monies for most of the office's expenses.

In 1935 the racial Nuremberg laws were passed in Germany. McDonald realized that as a result of these laws, many new German refugees would need assistance. Thus, he decided to resign his position as High Commissioner, but in a dramatic way that would call attention to the growing refugee problem. On December 3, 1935 McDonald publicly resigned his post; in his statement he accused the German government of planning racial extermination, and denounced the members of the League of Nations for their apathy and indifference to the issue.

Germany annexed Austria in March 1938. Just months later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt convened the Evian conference to discuss the refugee problem. As a result of the conference, Roosevelt created the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees (PAC), and named McDonald chairman. McDonald soon realized that he was facing the same obstacles that had stumped him as high commissioner. In 1940 he fought with the State Department when it denied a PAC request for special visas into the United States for outstanding European political, cultural, and labor leaders. McDonald was soon disillusioned. In 1943, he turned down an offer to lead the US delegation to the Bermuda Conference.

McDonald was also deeply troubled by the restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine. In 1945 he served on the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, which recommended that 100,000 Jewish

Survivors be admitted into Palestine immediately. In 1949 McDonald became the first American ambassador to Israel.